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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#)
SUBJECT: STUDENT LEADER BECOMES CABINET MINISTER

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR FRANCISCO FERNANDEZ
FOR REASON 1.4 (D)

[¶1.](#) (SBU) President Chavez announced Sunday the appointment of pro-government student leader Hector Rodriguez as Minister of Popular Power for the Office of the President. Rodriguez replaces Jesse Chacon, who is the United Socialist Party of Venezuela's (PSUV's) candidate for mayor of the Sucre borough of Caracas, one of the mayorships that the opposition hopes to win in November.

[¶2.](#) (SBU) Rodriguez, 26, graduated from the Central University of Venezuela (UCV) in 2007 with a degree in law. He gained notoriety in Venezuela as an ardent and articulate pro-government student leader in the run-up to the December 2007 constitutional referendum. His work earned him a spot on the President's Committee for Student Popular Power and later as Vice President of the PSUV for Guarico State.

[¶3.](#) (C) COMMENT. Chavez described Rodriguez's appointment as an infusion of, "new blood, young blood in this path towards socialism." Chavez's selection of Rodriguez is a relative novelty. Past ministerial appointments have generally come from the ranks of long-time Chavez associates. Rodriguez replaces one of Chavez's closest associates and a former fellow leader in the failed 1992 coup. Chavez's efforts to create a mass pro-government student movement have so far been unsuccessful, but Rodriguez's promotion gives the BRV a very visible counterweight to prominent pro-democracy student leaders. END COMMENT.
DUDDY